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STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN, 18 MAY 1992*

I should like to welcome you to another session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean.

The General Assembly, by its resolution 46/49 of 9 December 1991, has decided that the Conference on the Indian Ocean should be structured in more than one stage and that the first stage of the Conference be convened in 1993, or as soon as possible, in accordance with that resolution.

The General Assembly has also decided that the Ad Hoc Committee will hold a session of five working days in 1992 to perform its preparatory functions for the various stages envisaged for the Conference.

The Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee has held three meetings to consider the organization of work for this session and the action to be taken with regard to the filling of the vacancies in the Bureau: namely, the election of a Vice-Chairman from the Eastern European Group and the election of a Vice-Chairman to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Miss Jill Courtney of Australia, who was the Vice-Chairman from the Group of Western European and Other States. With regard to the latter, the Permanent Representative of Australia, by a letter dated 9 April 1992, has informed me that they will not be seeking to fill the Bureau position in the Committee. The Bureau decided to ask the Secretary of the Committee to address letters to the Chairmen of the two regional groups concerned requesting them to submit nominations to fill the two vacancies. We also have to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Mr. Isslamet Poernomo of Indonesia who was the Vice-Chairman from the Asian Group.

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* Issued in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its 412th meeting.

The draft provisional agenda proposed by the Bureau is before you in document A/AC.159/L.115.

With regard to the organization of work for this session, the Bureau has outlined some of the matters which the Committee may consider to perform its preparatory functions for the first stage of the Conference. Among these are:

- Duration of the Conference;
- Dates of the Conference;
- Allocation of seats to the respective geographical regions in the General Committee;
- The number of main committees and working groups to be established;
- Duration of the general debate;
- Duration of meetings of main committees/working groups;
- Allocation of agenda items.

The Bureau also discussed some practical aspects on the convening of the first stage of the Conference in accordance with the provisions of resolution 46/49. Among these were the General Assembly's request to the Secretary-General to invite all States to participate and its call "for the full and active participation in the Conference of the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, whose cooperation and participation is essential for the success of the Conference".

In considering these provisions of resolution 46/49, the Bureau was mindful of the fact that three permanent members of the Security Council had withdrawn from the Committee and that several major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, who are members of this Committee, did not participate in its work in the previous two sessions.

The Bureau felt that it would greatly facilitate the work of the Committee during this session if the views of those countries with regard to their participation in the first stage of the Conference were available to members. The Bureau therefore requested the Chairman to hold consultations with the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean regarding their full participation.

Accordingly, I held consultations with the representatives of those member States. The three permanent members of the Security Council and some of the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, with whom I consulted, informed me that they would not find it possible to participate in a Conference based on the 1971 Declaration. They were of the view that the 1971 Declaration had been overtaken by the positive developments in international political relations. Their position was that there was no longer rivalry between the great Powers in the Indian Ocean.

During my consultations there were indications from some countries that, taking into account such positive developments, they may not be averse to considering any new approaches and practical steps towards the achievement of the goal of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean.

The results of my consultations were conveyed to the members of the Bureau on 23 April 1992. It was decided that I should present them to the members of the Committee for their consideration.

As you are well aware, the Ad Hoc Committee was established in 1972, as a follow-up of the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. The Committee's work has been based on that Declaration. A Meeting of the Littoral and Hinterland States of the Indian Ocean was held in 1979. That meeting marked a major step towards the convening of a Conference on the Indian Ocean. In 1979, the General Assembly, by its resolution 34/80 B of 11 December 1979, requested the Ad Hoc Committee to undertake the preparatory work for the convening of the Conference, including consideration of appropriate arrangements for any international agreement that might ultimately be reached for the maintenance of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, as referred to in paragraph 3 of resolution 2832 (XXVI).

The General Assembly in its resolution 46/49 has noted with satisfaction the preparatory work done by the Ad Hoc Committee in the implementation of its mandate for the convening of the Conference. The full and active participation of all the permanent members of the Security Council and major maritime users has been deemed essential for the success of the Conference. However, it is evident that there would not be full participation of permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean in the Conference, as envisaged in resolution 46/49.

The situation that has thus arisen needs the Committee's careful consideration.

In placing these matters before the Committee, I thought I should emphasize the importance the Committee has attached to the convening of the Conference and also refer to the difficulties involved in convening the Conference.

The Committee may decide on the course of action to be adopted and report accordingly to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.